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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES

NUMBER ONE IN THE INDUSTRY SINCE 1895

Special Issue

100 YEARS OF THE AUTOMOBILE

- How It All Began
- The Name Game
- Top 40 Cars
- Hits And Misses
- Image Makers
- Japan's Rise
- Truck History

— and much more —

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES

May, 1985/Volume 165, Number 5

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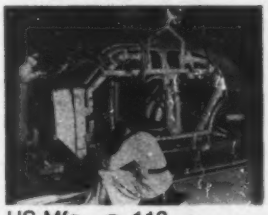

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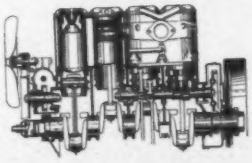

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"It's a senseless waste of time."—Siegfried Marcus, Austrian inventor, who predated Benz and Daimler by over 15 years in the development of the internal combustion engined carriage, on the future of such contraptions (see page 61 for more of Marcus' exploits).

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100th Anniversary

AS YOU SEE IT: TOP 40 CARS THROUGH HISTORY

We asked a random sampling of our readers for their opinions of the significant happenings in auto industry history. Here's what you said.

by Jennifer G. Mintzer
and Mary Ann Angeli

In an effort to involve you, our readers, in our 100th Anniversary of the Automobile issue, *AI* sent some of you (a random sampling) questionnaires asking for your choice of the top three manufacturing and technical advances in the auto industry, as well as the top ten vehicle models worldwide over the past one hundred years (1885-1985).

While our original questionnaire asked for your perceptions as to the ten most significant cars ever to appear worldwide, the enthusiastic response was overwhelming. We received thousands of returns, with hundreds of cars nominated for a spot in the top ten.

Top 40 Cars

Therefore, we present herewith, in order of numbers of mentions, a list of the top 40 most significant cars along with some of the rationale as perceived by a broad sampling of *AI* readers. We have lumped some models together since the reasons given for each were nearly identical, i.e., various model years of Thunderbird, Lincoln and Corvette.

Tops on the list of technical advances with 24.3% of your vote, was the automatic transmission, a 1904 invention (Sturtevant), "responsible for making driving simple" and for allowing the not-so-terribly-coordinated to drive. Next in line with 19.3% of the vote came electronics, including electronic engine controls, electronic ignition, on-board computers and electronic emissions controls.

Your third pick with 16.8% of the response was the electric self-starter, developed by Kettering and introduced in a Cadillac in 1911.

The assembly line snagged 30.9% of your vote for the top manufacturing advance during the past century. Robotics, with 26.6% and automation with 9.3% of your vote, placed second and third. Whereas the assembly line "made the price of the car feasible for the masses," robots provided "good quality independent of the human element."

The task of selecting the top vehicles worldwide was a tough one for many of you. Most of you based your choices on the idea that these vehicles contributed to the overall advancement of the automotive industry, were "quality-built for the money spent," and "presented a level of luxury, convenience and satisfaction that pioneered their own era."

Model T First

Ford's Model T claimed first place in our survey, while the Chevy Corvette came in second. In fact, Ford cars dominated the top 10 of our top 40 models. The Models A and T won "for assembly line principles," "bringing transportation to the masses," "making the auto affordable," and "putting America on wheels."

Another Ford model which won a large chunk of your vote was the '55-'57 Thunderbird: "a special car for young people," "the first personal luxury car," and "an evolution from a tiny two-seater to today's aerodynamic model and everything in between."

The Mustang (1964) was said to "start a new generation of cars for young people," called "the first affordable American sports car," "ultimate performance car," "most imitated car," and the "best post-war marketing attempt by a US maker."

Ford's Edsel (1957) was named "the most famous failure." The 1932 Ford V8 was claimed to have "launched hot rodding," "popularized the V8 in the US," and given "Joe Average his first taste of a rich man's world."

You liked the '55 Chevy because it was the "first high production sedan to be accepted in the market." The Corvette (1953) won your hearts because it led plastics technology, was the "first bold move outside the mainstream by a Big Three maker," and was "America's answer to Europe on the luxury sports car."

On the other hand, the Corvair (1960) was picked because it "gave rise to NHTSA with Nader as midwife," and "paved the way for Nader's Raiders that started the many aspects of safety in vehicles."

Volkswagen's Beetle came in fourth. Some of you called it the "people's car," "simple and cheap," and the "first reliable worldwide small car." It was lauded for its low-maintenance air-cooled engine, its simplicity, low price, versatility, reliability, dependability and for being a worldwide sales phenomenon.

Chrysler's Airflow (1934) was judged "years ahead of its time," the "original aero car," the "first car with modern proportions," and a "pacesetter for streamlined cars." The K-cars (1981) received votes because they "showed that if a worker on the line got a good kick in the ass he could build a car the public would buy." Plus the Ks "saved Chrysler."

Mercedes Fifth

Mercedes-Benz came in fifth for "innovation," "high engineering standards for the world," and "the most copied designs." The Gullwing (1955) took the fancy of most because it "inspired sports/luxury cars with its classic design."

Pontiac's Fiero (1984) was called "a new direction for US auto history," the "newest use of plastics," and a "tremendous opportunity for fre-

100th Anniversary

Your Choice for the Top Forty Cars of History

Car	Why You Voted for It
1. Ford Model T	"For assembly line principles and bringing transportation to the masses; made auto affordable; changed concept of transportation; car for the common man; Model T put America on wheels, VW Beetle put world on wheels."
2. Chevy Corvette	"Led in plastics technology; first bold move outside of mainstream by a Big Three maker; first true American sports car; '65 model had disc brakes; introduced new concepts of suspensions, engines, and body; '84—state of the art."
3. Ford Mustang	"Started new generation of cars for young people; affordable American sports car; ultimate performance; best post-war marketing attempt by US maker; most imitated car; fuel economy."
4. VW Beetle	"People's car; simple and cheap; granddaddy of fuel-economy boxes; right car at the right time; most versatile power plant; simplicity and versatility made it long-lived; first reliable worldwide smallcar; changed US attitude toward small car; worldwide phenomenon."
5. Mercedes 300SL	"Innovative; set high engineering standards for the world; Gullwing inspired sports/luxury closed cars; Gullwing—spaceframe, fuel injection, classically designed sports car; sustained high standards; 300SL superior machine for its time; designs most copied."
6. Ford T-Bird	"First personal luxury car, what an evolution from tiny two-seater to today's aerodynamic model; reliability."
7. VW Rabbit	"First modern economy sporty sedan; everyone copied."
8. Rolls Royce	"Nothing exceeds like excess; workmanship, highest quality, sets world standards, pure luxury; speaks to quality and excellence."
9. Model A	"Worthy successor to the T."
10. Cadillac	"Proving ground for luxury features; American standard; 1927 LaSalle first car to be officially styled which began a tradition for world auto industry; 1930 Caddy V16—state-of-the-art, stunningly engineered, first hydraulic valve lift."
11. Pontiac Fiero	"New direction for US auto industry; newest use of plastics; application of mill and drill; use of existing production components; open-ended car concept; plastic body and new manufacturing techniques; unbeatable for price and styling; tremendous opportunity of frequent inexpensive exterior styling changes; multiple unique entries off one platform."
12. Lincoln	"Ride qualities ('73 Town Car); Mark series most beautiful cars in the world evolved around this series."
13. Cord	"Unitized body, front-wheel-drive; best US pre-war design; electric shift; folding headlights; fwd innovator 50 years before its time."
14. Chrysler Airflow	"Years ahead of its time; original aero car; first car with modern proportions; unitized body; set pace for streamlined cars."
15. Porsche	"Invented Beetle; air-cooled engine and best high performance sports car today; engineering, performance, and handling."
16. Austin Mini	"First mass produced development of transverse front-wheel-drive small car; new idea on passenger space; started fwd mini-car era."
17. Jaguar XKE	"Highly powered sports car; beautiful design and comparatively cheap; distinctive styling."
18. Corvair	"Ushered in safety era; gave rise to NHTSA with Nader as mid-wife; unique product tied to rise of consumerism; spawned auto safety; unique radical design; first economy car by the Big 3; led to first safety regulations; air-cooled rear engine; innovative use of aluminum; started personal car fad; first turbocharged production car; bold engineering; controversial."
19. Jeep	"Standard for all four-wheel-drive vehicles to come; an enduring love affair; war horse; four-wheel-drive for the masses."
20. 1955 Chevy	"First high production sedan to be accepted in market; light weight, high performance V8 available."
21. Oldsmobile	"Curved dash Olds first affordable car; Olds '40 first automatic transmission of current design."
22. Ferrari	"One of three most wanted dream cars."
23. Duesenberg	"First supercharged engine; the standard for quality; influenced future design; took the auto out of transportation and into mobile art."
24. MG	"Started sports car enthusiasm in US; launched sports car craze; first successful sports car in the US; classic design, affordable price."
25. 1932 Ford V8	"Launched hot rodding; popularized V8 in US, first low cost V8; gave Joe Average his first taste of rich man's world."
26. Honda	"Made it simple."
27. Studebaker	"Ageless beauty; '53 Studebaker precursor of today's styling; Lark—right car, wrong market/marketing; '46 a styling leader."
28. Pontiac GTO	"First muscle car; symbol of US performance; golden age muscle car; started performance cars; low buck, high performance excess."
29. Toyota	"Japanese quality entry into US; best selling car in the world."
30. Edsel	"Most famous failure; most infamous car ever produced; taught world need for marketing skills."
31. Stanley	"The Stanley Steamer set early standards in reliabilty, speed, power."
32. Tucker	"First rear-engined car with many features later copied; forerunner of utility and ideas."
33. Olds Toronado	"First American high volume front-wheel-drive; high priced personal car."
34. DeLorean	"Proves an independent can't make cars alone; well enough put together to prove that a small group still has a chance at the big time."
35. Packard	"Could have been the American Mercedes-Benz; refinements; excelled in performance and image."
36. Audi	"Successful development of truly efficient unit body structure to mass produce car."
37. Hudson	"Many new design ideas; comfortable; very fast car in the '50's; first with step-down interior; revolutionized frame-type construction."
38. Citroen	"Aerodynamics; suspension; novelty for long production runs; first mass production to realize full potential of aerodynamics."
39. Chrysler K-Cars	"Saved Chrysler; showed that if a worker on the line got a good kick in the ass he could build a car that the public would buy."
40. Mazda	"Japan's answer to the world on performance, quality, luxury, and price; changed image of Japanese cars; rotary engine."

quent inexpensive exterior styling changes." The Pontiac GTO (1964) was praised as the "first muscle car," and as a "symbol of US performance." Rolls-Royce made it into the top ten because "nothing exceeds like excess." Cadillac made it to tenth place because it is a "proving ground for luxury features," and an "American standard."

Lincoln's Mark series were called "the most beautiful cars in the world." You especially liked the curved dash Olds (1900-05)—"the first affordable car,"—and the Toronado (1966)—"the first high volume front-wheel drive, high-priced personal car."

The Austin Mini, which you claimed started the front-wheel-drive mini-car era, was a "new idea in passenger space" with its transverse engine. The Cord (1936) with fwd and unique styling was "50 years before its time."

The Citroen was named the "first mass production model to realize the full potential of aerodynamics." The DeLorean (1983), you said, "proves that the little guy can't start his own auto company." But he can try a few businesses on the side.

Duesenbergs set "the standard for quality," and "took the automobile out of transportation into mobile art."

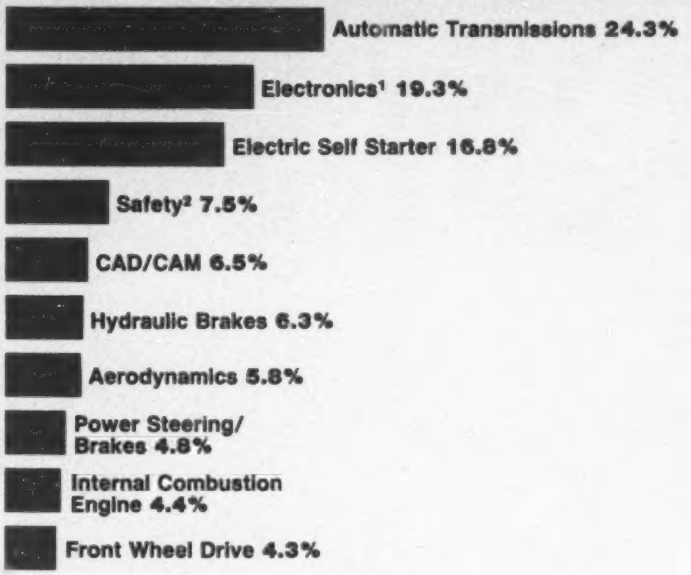
You said the Hudson's (1948) "step-down design revolutionized frame type construction" and its "straight 8 could keep up with today's cars in 0-60 mph times."

You're having "an enduring love affair" with the Jeep, you like the MG for "its classic design at an affordable price."

Mazda, you claim, is "Japan's answer to the world on performance, quality, luxury and price," and Toyota is "Japan's first quality entry into the US."

The Packard (any year) "could have been the American Mercedes-Benz." Porsche makes the "best high-performance sports car today." The Studebaker (1953) had "ageless beauty" and was a "styling leader" (1946), even if it was the "right car for the wrong market." ■

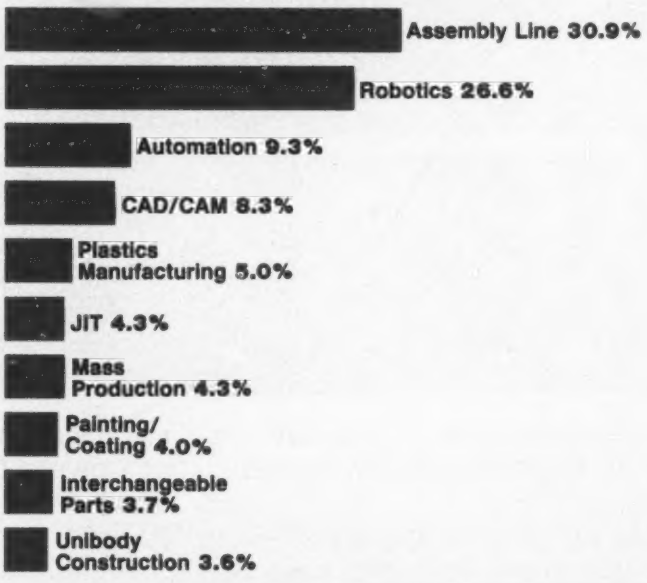
WHAT HAVE BEEN THE TEN MOST SIGNIFICANT TECHNICAL ADVANCES IN AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN AND/OR ENGINEERING OVER THE PAST 100 YEARS?



[1]—Including engine controls, electronic ignition, on-board computers and emission controls.

[2]—Including anti-block steering systems, seat belts and safety glass.

TOP TEN MANUFACTURING ADVANCES OVER THE PAST 100 YEARS



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